

## S.O.S.

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Tuesday May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1989  
USS Montana

Code: 6.14  
First broadcast: **Monday March 6<sup>th</sup> 2023**  
**3.632m** viewers  
41m51s

Guest Stars Brandon Routh, Walter Perez, Alex Carter, Emerson Brooks, Rocky Myers, Kelvin Han Yee  
Written by **Dean Georgaris**  
Directed by **Chris Grismer**

*"What war is this?"*  
*"One I hope we never have to fight."*

### Official Synopsis

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When Ben leaps onto a naval battleship during war games in 1989, he must not only navigate a dangerous rescue mission but also contend with his commanding officer, XO Alexander Augustine, otherwise known as Addison's father.

### Leap In

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Ben arrives on a ship, seemingly in the middle of a war. "Holy ship!"

### Cut Scenes

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The production script was almost identical to the episode as aired, with a few minor changes (as was normal for this season).<sup>1</sup>

Addison and Jenn talking in the corridor was edited slightly. In the script, Magic asked "Would you do it? Fix the past for your mother or father, risk who you are for them?" and Jenn replied "That's a pretty easy 'no' for me, but in fairness I

am an extreme case and may have a heart of stone."

When writing, Georgaris had also made the decision that "I don't want it to be that life is so simple, that we get to fix everything in a *Quantum Leap*," so at the end of the episode as scripted and filmed, Addison made a surprised comment that her father still left the Navy, prompting Ben and her father to have a discussion in which he explained that because of all the things he did wrong in the revised timeline, he needed to leave the service. When writers decided to add Martínez to the episode, it felt to Georgaris as if there were too many "endings" and this scene was cut.<sup>1</sup>

### Music

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The Original Series Soundtrack features 8m11s of Daniel James Chan's music across four tracks (44-47 of 63), including some unused material:

44. USS Montana (1m33s)  
(i) Ben leaps in, starting from 0m30s in the episode. The televised version is slightly different between 0m27s-0m34s, seeming to loop part of the music  
(ii) 0m47s: leading into the opening titles, from 4m34s
45. Trouble Aboard Ship (4m5s)  
(i) from 16m45s  
(ii) 1m50s: from 27m7s, segues into:  
(iii) 2m59s: from 37m17s. In the finished episode, this cue continues into 'Everything Will Be Okay' via a short bridge, with music playing continuously.
46. Everything Will Be Okay (1m32s)  
from 38m31s

47. Martínez Reveal (1m01s) from 40m06s. The first note is different in the televised version.

## GTFW

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Magic believes that the project is “part of whatever mysterious force bends [the moral] arc for the better” Although this does align with Magic’s beliefs so far, it does seem a difficult pitch to have made to Congress.

## Allusions

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Jenn fears that Addison changing her - personal history will result in a similar experience that Marty McFly had in the 1985 movie *Back to the Future*, where he almost managed to remove himself from history entirely. (Whether the Project team would be aware of these changes, as Marty is, or oblivious to them, as all the other characters are, is an interesting topic: see Dubious Logic for *Let Them Play*.) Marty also meets his mother and has some revelations about her personality, as Addison does here about her father. The film series is also referenced in the *The Gang Turns Black*, *Ben Song for the Defense*, and the reboot pilot script.

Drake jokes that the explosion might be the result of an attack by Moby Dick, the titular whale from the 1851 novel.

Magic (mis)quotes Martin Luther King: “The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” The actual quote begins “the arc of the moral universe...”

## Production Goofs

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When Addison tells Ben who he is, he holds his hands up to chest level — the reflection of Rossi still has his hands by his waist.

In the Navy, the practice is to wear belts adjusted (or shortened) so that the metal tip of one end aligns perfectly with the buckle, known as “metal-to-metal” to the wearers. Characters here are seen wearing belts misadjusted, for example when Ben walks in to find the Captain posing his brain teaser about the height of the Montana, a low camera angle shows the Master Chief’s belt clearly. Most warfare devices (the gold pins above the left breast pocket) and the name tags (above the right breast) are touching the pocket throughout, while they should be a quarter inch above each pocket. Although the trousers are period accurate, the shirts are more modern.

After the climax and before Addison’s touching moment with her father comes an establishing overhead shot of the Iowa. In the lower-right is an overlaid digital counter signifying a special effects shot, that should have been removed before broadcast.

## Losing Touch with Reality

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An XO would probably not refer to a subordinate officer by first name, as Augustine does to Carl.

A detained officer would usually be taken to a holding area, not directly to the brig.

Augustine tells Ben to “shut the door” (it’s a “hatch”).

## Production Notes

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The Story Area, a one-page document shared with the studio in advance of writing a script, described this episode as “we’re on a battleship, and there’s a Captain, and Addison’s father is going to be the executive officer” along with a brief summary of the events. Story

Areas can prompt networks to flag up areas for concern, although this did not happen on the first season of *Quantum Leap*.<sup>1</sup>

Alex Berger joined the writing staff in September/October, as the producers felt they were short in the writers' room due to writers working on pre- and post-production. He had worked with Martin Gero on *Blindspot* and knew Dean Georganis, who described him as "terrific at running the room." He brought with him the suggestion that the USS Iowa, now a museum, could be used as it was docked 35 minutes away from their studios. Georganis described that they "will look for interesting worlds that we can enter that will feel immersive but that are conducive to actually being filmed."<sup>1</sup>

As Ben had already had a moment connecting with his mother in *What a Disaster!*, the writers' room wanted to enable Addison to have a similar opportunity. As they had already determined her father would be in the military, he was assigned to 'the battleship episode'.<sup>1</sup>

This episode was based on events in the 1960s that inspired the movie *Crimson Tide* (1995).<sup>2</sup>

Georganis decided to write this himself despite usually keeping more arms-length from that level, explaining the particular demands of this segment ("figuring out the story and matching it to being able to filming") meant that he would likely have ended up very close to it anyway. He "personally gravitates towards very personal stories," which was likely the cause for the emotional elements of an otherwise dramatic plot. Despite Georganis's direct involvement bringing all his practical experience, the First Assistant Director still had to work

hard on the usual scheduling complexities, with all the risks that come alongside planning — Georganis later admitted that "we got lucky" as no cast members got sick, nor were there any problems with the weather during the three days they shot on the ship.<sup>1</sup>

The team decided to licence footage (something the original *Quantum Leap* had done several times but the new series had not) from the Universal film *Battleship* (2012), which informed a number of the plot beats — such as the emergency anchor drop. Many of the shots of the ship that did not show actors were lifted from the film, sometimes with colour correction. The aforementioned anchor drop took place during the day in *Battleship*, and at night in *S.O.S.*, so required darkening.<sup>1</sup>

Georganis credited Drew Lindo with supporting him in some of the idea generation, along with technical advisor Captain William Toti. Although technical advisers were the norm that year, having someone involved that early was not. Toti told Georganis "all the things in the basic idea I had wrong," such as an early wish to include a depth charge, which Toti told him had stopped being used around 1960. They worked together on the idea of using mines, which Georganis originally suggested as the climax, but Lindo proposed bringing earlier in the episode to enable more time to be spent after rescuing the people on the submarine. Toti was able to suggest the background on what the mines were doing there. "One of the jobs of writing a show is taking all the good ideas!" Georganis also asked Martin Gero to write the dialogue for the final scene with Martínez, as Gero had provided all previous dialogue for the character. Georganis then created the Walker character to make him "noticeably colourful."<sup>1</sup>

The script was completed three to four weeks before filming began.<sup>1</sup>

Brandon Routh (XO Alexander Augustine) was approached for the role early on. As Georganis described it “every now and then we have a role that might be appealing enough to the kind of actor that might not normally drop in for an episode.” They looked for someone “who would not be the typical tough, grizzled dad you would be expecting” and felt Routh would come with a “natural authenticity... a guilelessness.”<sup>1</sup> Routh accepted it based on a detailed outline. Although earlier in life he’d enjoyed playing more comic roles, he felt “I’m at a place in my career, and in my life, where I’m working on emotional authenticity. And really being able to speak truthfully in those heavy moments.” As a father of a ten-year-old son, he was also able to pull from his own life experiences when building Alexander’s character.<sup>6</sup> Although Routh relished the opportunity to play in uniform, he gave credit to “a wonderful stunt double” for taking care of the action sequences.<sup>3</sup>

Caitlin Bassett was happy to be taking a central role in the plotline, rather than “just assisting Ben in his situation.” She recalled: “I had Dean texting me as he was writing it... ‘oh, I just wrote a real good one about you and your dad talking’... and then I was nervous!... but then I saw it on the page, and I was just super excited!” Fortunately, the episode came at this point in the series as she reflected back that “I think I was really feeling more comfortable with her by 12, 13 — especially 13.” When she found out Routh had been cast: “I think I told everyone in my life that they had to cast Superman as my dad! I texted my dad, I was like ‘guess what!’” The episode was close to home for her as her father was a Vietnam veteran, so she

had been interested in the idea of generational service,<sup>4</sup> and it also afforded her the opportunity to spend time on a ship, something which as an Army officer she had always wanted to do but never could — “I finally got to round out that experience.”<sup>5</sup>

The first three days of the episode were shot on the USS Iowa, with the CEC and bridge filmed subsequently on Universal’s Stage 41.<sup>2</sup> Drone footage of the Iowa was shot, with the dock CGed out and replaced with sea. Routh was especially happy about the location filming as he’d been unable to attend the dedication ceremony a decade before.<sup>6</sup> The scene where Magic and Liu Wei meet was shot in the same bay during a speedy three-hour timeslot on the first day.<sup>7</sup> Ben’s leap in, and run out onto the deck and reactions to the mayhem, were shot at the end of the last location day. *Jimmy* and *Deliver Us from Evil* were partly shot outside a house in San Pedro, 30 seconds walk from a view overlooking the port, and the beach part of the bay area was seen in *A Leap for Lisa*.

The nuclear reactor set from *Leap. Die. Repeat* was repurposed here for the internal ship sets, and as such were shot last, giving the production team the longest time possible to make alterations.<sup>1</sup>

The final scene between Addison and her father was shot at the end of a long production day. Bassett remembered “Brandon was amazing,” she says. “We had actually decided amongst ourselves to get his coverage first to let me settle in. But honestly, I was so loaded. And [the emotion] was so accessible because my dad was a Vietnam veteran. There’s something about meeting your parents, at their age, and understanding them more deeply from an adult perspective,

that I was so available. So, I was like, 'Actually, Brandon, can you just shoot me first?' He was like, 'Absolutely.' We only did it once, maybe twice."<sup>5</sup>

For the shot in which Raymond Lee was pinned to the ground by guards, stunt coordinator Steve Bralver confirmed "I was just out of frame bottom left making sure Ray didn't hit his head when the two other sailors, also stuntmen, took him down."<sup>8</sup>

During filming there was little opportunity for improvisation, but one key moment saw some experimentation: in the script, Ben did not say anything to distract the Master at Arms; as aired, he would say "if I asked you a really dumb question, would that distract you?", which was one of many concepts that came up during filming by writer Dean Georgaris, Raymond Lee, script supervisor Heather Pollock and director Chris Grismer.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the background performers were veterans.<sup>1</sup>

Dean credited Deborah Pratt with the notion that Addison's father might have heard Addison's words at the end.<sup>4</sup>

Post production included several moments of expository ADR: Addison's explanation that "in the original timeline, he ignored the transmission" came several minutes after we'd been told this, but gave the audience a chance to "play catch-up" during a frantic scene; later the last two words of "why was he so cold to me growing up?" gave similar clarity. Also ADRed was Ben walking into Addison's quarters and saying "Sir, we need you, right now, you have to

act... Sir?" which eased the audience back in after a commercial break.<sup>1</sup>

NBC released 20 publicity photos on February 10<sup>th</sup> and the press screener on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. The publicity photos included a clear shot of Walter Perez in a uniform labelled 'WALKER', spoiling the twist at the end for some viewers.

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### Familiar Faces

Walter Perez as Martínez is back for the first time since *What a Disaster!*; this is his third of five appearances.

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### The Project

Ian acknowledges that there's a lot they don't understand about the accelerator.

Addison was 2½ by May 2nd 1989, placing her birth year in 1986 (making her slightly older than actress Caitlin Bassett, who was born in 1990).

This episode makes it clear that Martínez is definitely another leaper. The physics have changed since the original series though, as Ben can see him without making physical contact (unlike Sam and Alia in *Deliver Us from Evil*).

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### Notes and Observations

This episode returns to the standard saga sell with the original music, not referring back specifically to recent episodes, albeit with some updates since it was last used in *Paging Dr. Song*. Bold below denotes changes since the version in that episode.

Video	Audio
Ben in Tux [9]	Addison: <i>Dr. Ben Song...</i>
Ziggy [1]	<i>...risked everything...</i>
Ben steps into the accelerator x3 [1]	<i>...when he used the Quantum Leap Accelerator to travel back in time...</i>
Ian and Addison rush across the Project [1]	<i>...Now our team's working...</i>
Jenn and Magic [1]	<i>...to find out...</i>
Ian looks over at Addison's concerned face [1]	<i>...why...</i>
Ben in the front of the van [1]	<i>...As he leaps...</i>
Leapee reflection in side mirror [1]	<i>...between bodies with...</i>
Ben jumps to rescue Jamie [9]	<i>...no memory of who...</i>
Ben reacts to exploding restaurant [13] Girls prepare to play basketball [12]	<i>...he is, he still has...</i>
Ben and Tammy jump into cart [4]	<i>...one hope...</i>
Ben starts to leap out [8]	<i>...that his next leap...</i>
Ben flies through space [2]	<i>... takes him back...</i>
Beach [1]	<i>...to the place...</i>
Addison walks into apartment [1]	<i>...and people, he...</i>
Ben and Addison kiss [1]	<i>...calls home.</i>

This episode opens with a battle simulation, described colloquially as a 'wargame'. This type of military manoeuvre was popularised in 19th century Prussia and is still used today.

The team were not able to use the name of any commissioned battleship that sailed, so the Montana was invented. There was almost a real USS Montana with the same number: 67.

The Montana class planned in 1942 was placed on hold later that year, because the Iowa class and Essex class were using the shipyards intended for the Montana. They were formally cancelled in 1943.

When Ben leaps in, he hears a ringing in his ears. This would have been the after effects of an explosion the leapee heard before Ben arrived. Since Sam Beckett's

body was leaping, this is an issue the original series never faced, but as Ben is experiencing quantum entanglement, this brings with it the experience of any ill-effects the leapee might be suffering.

Magic says that no-one outside the military remembers the date May 2nd 1989, and it's true that no major world events (military or otherwise) happened specifically on that day. In wider news, the date fell in the middle of a major two-month protest in China's Tiananmen Square.

Much of this episode takes place in the 'CEC'. This stands for Combat Engagement Center.

A memorable moment in this episode concerns Martínez's use of "Mississippi" as a counting method. This method is used to similarly humorous effect in *V for Vodka* (2020), a short film that was Caitlin Bassett's only professional acting role before *Quantum Leap*.

At the end when Ben sees Martínez, we see a very brief flashback to his bio data in *What a Disaster!*, followed by a longer clip from *Salvation or Bust*.

This leap occurs over a short period of time — perhaps just two or three hours. It's not clear how much time has passed from the Project team's perspective since the last episode.

Per dialogue throughout, leaps so far have mostly taken place over one day, two at most, with only overnight gaps for the Project team, and the Project team's time running in sync with Ben's own. By this point both Ben and Addison should be on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of the story since his first leap, however the script refers to Ben's scenes as taking place on LD22 (presumably Leap

Day 22) and the Projects as D18 (Day 18).

At the end of the first NBC broadcast, a 15s trailer ran over the end credits with clips from *Ben Song for the Defense* and the caption "Next Monday".

## Unanswered Questions

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Why is Ziggy still running slow? This has been a topic that's bubbled under the surface in other episodes, but Ben explicitly calls out the fact that it's almost a cliché now.

Who came on the radio when Ben was asking for Walker the final time? Could that have been the real Walker, briefly taking back control from Martínez?

What was Martínez attempting to do during this leap that Ben unwittingly helped him with?

## Press Reviews

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*Vulkk*: "We have barely seen character development of Team Quantum Leap, bar Ian who has gone through the most in the past couple of episodes. And we have watched Magic contact his higher-ups in Washington in the previous episodes and in this episode, the Chinese. If they are going to make characters redundant then I would say Jennifer would be top of my list since nothing is being done with that character anyway."

*Tell-Tale TV*: "Overall, S.O.S. is another solid outing in the *Quantum Leap* canon, providing equal parts heart and action in a high-stakes setting while propelling the overarching plot with a shocking cliffhanger. What's Martínez's objective? Only time will tell. "

*TV Fanatic*: “Edging out her “No, Ma’am”ing scene on *Quantum Leap* Season 1 Episode 5, the tender moments where she invokes the child who just wanted her father to smile now top my list of Best Addison Moments.”

## Review

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This episode manages to live up to two requirements well: On the one hand, it’s a great action-adventure story, with battles and explosions (and on a budget, too, with all the newly filmed material taking place on a small number of claustrophobic sets, bolstered by footage ‘borrowed’ from elsewhere). On the other, it’s a deep exploration of Addison’s beginnings, and her relationship with her father. Caitlin Bassett has proven over the weeks that she’s capable of handling emotional pieces, and with a great scene partner in Brandon Routh, she excels here. If anything, in retrospect, it’s a pity the

writers have leant into this aspect of Bassett’s performance already as this could have come as an *M.I.A.*-esque shocker for the audience. But such is the way of first seasons, as the producers and cast play with the characters, and skills come out quite organically. Georganis’s script is often fun, particularly in “Walker”’s dialogue, and a special mention to be made for Alex Carter’s gruff yet fragile Captain who manages to hold scenes well against the extraordinary Brandon Routh.

**Guest Cast:** Brandon Routh (XO Alexander Augustine),<sup>9</sup> Walter Perez (Richard Martínez), Alex Carter (Captain Bill Drake), Emerson Brooks (Master Chief Nash), Rocky Myers (TAO), Kelvin Han Yee (Liu Wei), Rich Paul (Navigation Officer Murray), Justin Dean (Chief Engineer Lopez), David Ginlet (Officer of the Deck), Chris Carney (Surface Warfare Officer), Max Pescherine (Turret Specialist), Sean Samuels (Lieutenant Walker)

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<sup>1</sup> Dean Georganis, *The Quantum Leap Podcast: SOS Script to Screen Special*, March 21<sup>st</sup> 2022

<sup>2</sup> Dean Georganis, *Twitter*, March 6<sup>th</sup> 2023

<sup>3</sup> Brandon Routh, *SyFy Wire*, March 6<sup>th</sup> 2023

<sup>4</sup> Caitlin Bassett, Dean Georganis, *Fate’s Wide Wheel*, March 6<sup>th</sup> 2023

<sup>5</sup> Caitlin Bassett, *SyFy Wire*, March 7<sup>th</sup> 2023

<sup>6</sup> Brandon Routh, *The Quantum Leap Podcast*, March 6<sup>th</sup> 2023

<sup>7</sup> Dean Georganis, *in conversation with Matt Dale* March 7<sup>th</sup> 2023

<sup>8</sup> Steve Bralver, *Facebook*, February 10<sup>th</sup> 2023

<sup>9</sup> First name from script and promotional material